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186 Orig. Ed.

LETTER

TO THE

Rev. Dr. FREE.

By JOHN WESLEY, M.A.



B R I S T O L :

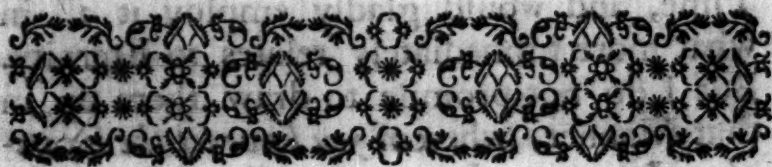
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LETTER

TO THE

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JOHN WILKINSON

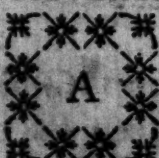


A.

LETTER, &c.

TULLAMORE, *May 2, 1758.*

REVEREND SIR,

- I.  LITTLE Tract appearing under your Name was Yesterday put into my Hands. You therein call upon me, To speak, "if
 " I have any Exceptions to make to what
 " is advanced," and promise to " reply as
 " fairly and candidly as I can expect, pro-
 " vided those Exceptions be drawn up, *as*
 " *you have set the Example*, in a short Com-
 " pass, and in the Manner wherein all *wise*
 " and *good* People would chuse to manage a
 " *Religious Dispute.*" *

2. " In a short Compass," Sir, they will certainly be drawn up, for my own Sake, as

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well

well as yours. For I know the Value of Time, and would gladly employ it all in what more immediately relates to Eternity. But I do not promise to draw them up in that Manner, whereof *you have set the Example*. I cannot; I dare not: For I fear God, and do really believe there is a Judgment to come. Therefore I dare not *return Evil for Evil*; neither *Railing for Railing*. Nor can I allow, that your Manner of treating this Subject, is that “wherein all *wise and good* “People, would chuse to manage a Religious Dispute.” Far, very far from it. I shall rejoice, if a little more Fairness and Candor, should appear in your future Writings. But I cannot expect it; for the *nigræ succus loliginis*, Wormwood and Gall seem to have infected your very Vitals.

3. THE Quotation from Bishop Gibson, which takes up Five out of Nineteen Pages, I have particularly answered already^b: And in a Manner wherewith I have good Reason to believe, his Lordship was entirely satisfied. With his Lordship therefore I have no present Concern: My Business now is with you only. And seeing you are “now ready, (as you express it) “to *run a Tilt*,” I must make what Defence I can. Only you must excuse me from Meeting you on the same Ground, or fighting you with the same Weapons. My

^b In “a Letter to the Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of London.”

My Weapons are only Truth and Love.
May the God of Truth and Love strengthen
my Weakness!

4. I WAVE what relates to Mr. V—'s personal Character, which is too well known to need my Defence of it: As likewise the Occurrence (real or imaginary I cannot tell) which gave Birth to your Performance. All that I concern myself with is your Five vehement Assertions, with Regard to the People call'd *Methodists*. These I shall consider in their Order, and prove to be totally false and groundless.

5. THE First is this. " Their whole Ministry is an open and avow'd Opposition to one of the fundamental Articles of our Religion." How so? Why " the 20th Article declares, We may not so expound one Scripture, that it be repugnant to another. " And yet it is notorious, that the *Methodists* do ever explain the Word *Faith* as it stands in some of St. *Paul*'s Writings, so as to make his Doctrine a direct and flat Contradiction to that of St. *James*."

THIS stale Objection has been answered an hundred Times, so that I really thought we should have heard no more of it. But since it is required, I repeat the Answer

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once

once more. By Faith we mean, *The Evidence of Things not seen*: By justifying Faith, a Divine Evidence or Conviction, that Christ *loved me and gave Himself for me*. St. Paul affirms, that a Man is justified by *this Faith*; which St. James never denies; but only asserts that a Man cannot be justified by a *dead Faith*. And this St. Paul never affirms.

“ BUT St. James declares, *Faith without Works is dead*. Therefore it is clearly
 “ St. James’s Meaning, that a Faith which is
 “ without *Virtue and Morality*, cannot produce Salvation. Yet the *Methodists* so
 “ explain St. Paul as to affirm that Faith
 “ without Virtue or Morality will produce
 “ Salvation.” Where? In which of their Writings? This needs some Proof: I absolutely deny the Fact. So that all which follows is mere Flourish, and falls to the Ground at once: And all that you aver of their “ open and scandalous Opposition to
 “ the 20th Article,” is no better than open and scandalous Slander.

6. YOUR second Assertion is this,
 “ The *Methodist*, for the Perdition
 “ of the Souls of his Followers, openly
 “ gives our Saviour the Lie, loads the
 “ Scripture with Falshood and Contradiction: (And pray what could a *Mahomedan*,
 “ *dan*,

“ *dan*, or *Infidel*, or the *Devil* himself do
 “ more) Yea, openly blaspheme the Name
 “ of *Christ*, by saying, That the Works of
 “ Men are of no *Consideration* at all; that
 “ God makes no Distinction between Vir-
 “ tue and Vice, that He does not hate Vice
 “ or love Virtue. What *Blasphemy* then and
 “ *Impiety* are those Wretches guilty of, who
 “ in their diabolical Phrenzy, dare to con-
 “ tradict our Saviour’s Authority, and that
 “ in such an essential Article of Religion?”

Here also the Methodists plead not guilty,
 and require you to produce your Evidence:
 To shew in which of their Writings they
 affirm, That God “ will not reward every
 “ Man according to his Works; that He
 “ makes no Distinction between Virtue and
 “ and Vice; that He does not hate Vice or
 “ love Virtue.” These are Positions which
 they never remember to have advanced. If
 you can, refresh their Memory.

7. You assert, Thirdly, The *Methodists*,
 by these Positions, “ destroy the essential
 “ Attributes of God, and ruin his Charac-
 “ ter as *Judge* of the World.” Very true—
 if they held these Positions. But here lies
 the Mistake. They hold no such Positions.
 They never did. They detest and abhor
 them. In arguing therefore on this Suppo-
 sition, you are again *beating the Air*.

You

8. You assert, Fourthly, The *Methodists*
 “ teach and propagate : downright Athe-
 “ ism (a *capital* Crime; and Atheists in
 “ some Countries have been put to Death)
 “ Hereby they make Room for all Manner
 “ of Vice and Villainy, by which Means the
 “ Bands of Society are dissolved. And there-
 “ fore this Attempt must be considered as
 “ a Sort of *Treason* by *Magistrates*.”

AGAIN we deny the whole Charge, and
 call for Proof: And, blessed be God, so do
 the *Magistrates* in *Great-Britain*. Bold, ve-
 hement Asseverations will not pass upon them
 for legal Evidences. Nor indeed on any
 reasonable Men. They can distinguish be-
 tween *arguing* and *calling Names*. The for-
 mer becomes a Gentleman and a Christian:
 But what is he, who can be guilty of the
 latter?

9. You assert, Lastly, That any who
 chuse a *Methodist* Clergyman for their Lec-
 turer, ^h “ put into that Office, which should
 “ be held by a Minister of the Church of
 “ *England*, an Enemy who undermines not
 “ only the *legal* Establishment of that
 “ Church, but also the Foundation of all
 “ Religion.”

ONCE more we must call upon you for
 the Proof: The Proof of these two Particu-
 lars,

g P. 10, 11. h P. 13.

lars, First, That I, *John Wesley*, am “ an
 “ Enemy to the Church, and that I under-
 “ mine not only the legal Establishment of
 “ the Church of *England*, but also the very
 “ Foundations of all Religion.” Secondly,
 That “ Mr. V— is an Enemy to the Church,
 “ and is undermining all Religion, as well
 “ as the Establishment.”

10. ANOTHER Word and I have done.
 Are there “ certain *Qualifications* required
 “ of all *Lecturers*, before they are by Law
 “ permitted to speak to the People?” And
 is a *Subscription* to the Thirty Nine Articles
 of Religion, one of these *Qualifications*?
 And is a Person who does not “ conform to
 “ such *Subscription*” disqualified to be a
Lecturer? Or, who “ has ever *beld* or *pub-*
lished any Thing contrary to what the
 “ Church of *England* maintains?” Then cer-
 tainly you, Dr. *John Free*, are not “ permit-
 “ ed by Law to speak to the People.” Nei-
 ther are you “ qualified to be a *Lecturer*”
 in any Church in *London* or *England*, as by
 Law *established*. For you flatly deny and
 openly oppose more than One or Two of
 those Articles. You do not in any wise con-
 form to the *Subscription* you made, before
 you was ordain’d either Priest or Deacon.
 You both *bold* and *publish* (if you are the Au-
 thor and Publisher of the Tract before me)
 what is grossly, palpably “ contrary to what
 the

“ the Church of *England* maintains,” in her Homilies as well as Articles : Those Homilies to which you have also subscribed, in subscribing the 36th Article. You have subscribed them, Sir : But did you ever read them ? Did you ever read so much as the Three first Homilies ? I beg of you, Sir, to read these at least, before you write again about the Doctrine of the Church of *England*. And would it not be prudent to read a few of the Writings of the *Methodists*, before you undertake a farther Confutation of them ? At present you know not the Men or their Communication. You are as wholly unacquainted both with them and their Doctrines, as if you had lived all your Days in the Islands of *Japan*, or the Deserts of *Arabia*. You have given a furious Assault to you know not whom : And you have done it, you know not why. You have not hurt *me* thereby ; but you have hurt yourself : Perhaps in your Character ; certainly in your Conscience. For this is not doing to others as you would they should do unto you. When you grow cool, I trust you will see this clearly : And will no more accuse, in a Manner so remote from Fairness and Candor,

Rev. Sir,

Your Servant for CHRIST's Sake,

JOHN WESLEY.

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